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ABSTRACT

A study was made of nine elementary school principals involved in implementing a curriculum innovation in their schools. The goal of this research was to determine what principals actually do on a day-to-day basis in their role as facilitators of change in their schools and to learn if there was a difference in the effectiveness of their actions in terms of changes they were engaged in. This year-long study, the Principal-Teacher Interaction (PTI) study, looked at the intervention behaviors, those actions influencing the change process, taken by principals and others to facilitate the changes occurring in their schools. This article reports some of the major PTI study findings regarding leadership for change. It also provides examples of what principals do to facilitate change, and concludes with some suggestions for practitioners that are based on the findings. A list is provided of the characteristics of effective leaders for change. (JO)

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MORE EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP FOR CHANGE: SOME FINDINGS FROM THE PRINCIPAL TEACHER INTERACTION (PTI) STUDY

Suzanne M. Stiegelbauer

National attention to educational issues has increasingly emphasized a need for school improvements relating to student achievement, teacher satisfaction and a return to the basics. Much of the pressure for change has focused on the principal to provide curriculum leadership and facilitation for change. Research on Effective schools has pointed to the importance of the principal in this role, but offers few suggestions as to how principal behaviors might be structured to increase the success or effectiveness of their efforts in their schools. How can school change be assisted? How do effective leaders affect the change process?

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With these questions in mind, the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education, Research on the Improvement Process (RIP) staff, at the University of Texas at Austin studied nine elementary school principals involved in implementing a curriculum innovation in their school. The goal of this research was to determine what principals actually do on a day-to-day basis in their role as facilitators of change in their schools, and further to learn if there was a difference in the effectiveness of their actions in terms of the changes they were engaged in. This year-long study, the Principal-Teacher Interaction (PTI) study, looked at the intervention behaviors, those actions influencing the change process, taken by principals and others to facilitate the changes occurring in their schools.

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The findings from the PTI study show that approaches taken by different principals do vary and that they have different effects. This article reports some of the major PTI study findings regarding leadership for change. It also provides examples of what principals do to facilitate change, and concludes with some suggestions for practitioners that are based on the findings.

The PTI Study

The PTI study focused on principals and their teachers as they were involved in implementing new instructional practices. Three districts were selected based on whether their schools were in their first, second or third year of implementation of a particular curriculum program. In each district three schools were selected based on the hypothesized leadership style of their principal, making a total of nine schools in the study. Since earlier studies by RIP staff had suggested that the principals' "style" might be an indicator of their approach to implementation and the effectiveness of that approach (Hall, Rutherford & Griffin, 1982). All of the principals selected were viewed as doing a satisfactory job in their schools. Teachers who were potential users of the innovations being implemented at the schools were asked to participate. Research staff collected data in each school through personal interviews, questionnaires, observations, regular telephone interviews with principals, and principals' logs of their activities related to implementation.

Facilitating Implementation: Functions

Data from all the PTI sites were reviewed to see what was occurring to make the change happen at each site. The interventions of all actors in the process--the principal, teachers, and other facilitators--were coded according to source, target and function of each behavior. A sample intervention, "the principal meets with a resource teacher to plan for a staff meeting," shows

the source to be the principal, the target the resource teacher, and the function of the intervention is planning for the staff meeting. Intervention behaviors from all sites were classified by eight major functions: 1) developing supportive organizational arrangements, 2) training, 3) consulting and reinforcing, 4) monitoring and evaluating, 5) communicating externally, 6) disseminating, 7) impeding (actions taken to restrain or restrict implementation), and 8) responding to concerns.

Analysis of this intervention data showed that regardless of the year of implementation, activities in the first four functions appear to be necessary for any implementation effort. However, the principal's degree of involvement with these functions varied with his/her style. Often, other personnel would be involved in filling the needs of the functions either at the delegation of the principal or due to the principal's lack of action or attention.

Style and Approaches to Leadership

Data analysis of the intervention behaviors of the principals in the study revealed three distinct principal styles with specific behaviors related to each. One, the Responder style principal, places heavy emphasis on allowing teachers and others to take the lead. They see their primary role as administrative, yet emphasize the personal side of their interactions with teachers and the community. They tend to deal with decision making on a moment-to-moment basis and have short term goals that change as situations in the school demand. Responder style principals let things happen.

Another, the Manager style principal, varies more in behaviors, and considers the interests of teachers, the school and the district in his/her decisions, seemingly in that order. They are efficient administrators and see that basic jobs get done well, yet they protect their teachers against overload. When a particular innovation is given priority by the district or

by school need, they become very involved with their teachers in helping the change occur. Manager style principals help things happen.

The third, the Initiator style principal, seizes the lead and makes things happen, occasionally at the expense of others' interests. A vision of what the school can be guides their actions. Decisions are made in relation to the school's goals and in terms of what is best for students, teachers, and themselves, in that order. They will often reinterpret district programs and policies to better suit the needs of their school. Initiator style principals make things happen.

Each style represented a behavioral profile of intervention activities. Of the nine sites, four principals were identified as using the Responder change facilitator style, three as using the Manager style, and two as using the Initiator style. In each case, their change facilitating behaviors were viewed in terms of what they did to aid the implementation process, what others did, interrelationships between the two, and the effects of that process on the classroom practice of teachers (Hall, et al., 1983).

Differences in Principal Interventions

Further data analysis showed major differences in the number and kinds of interventions principals of different styles did. Principals using the Responder style had the lowest number of interventions and did not appear to have any overall plan for those interventions they did make. Manager style principals, because they involved themselves with their teachers in all aspects of implementation, had the highest number of interventions. Initiator style principals, because they often delegated responsibilities in implementation, were in between the two. The schools lead by Initiator style principals, however, had the most total interventions for all actors.

Initiator style principals made more classroom interventions and more decisions regarding rules and policies. They often used the same or similar interventions on all teachers, reflecting some broader planning for desired outcomes. Manager style principals often worked with subsets of teachers, such as grade-level teams rather than with individuals. Initiators and Managers did equal frequency of monitoring and evaluation. Comparatively, responder principals did little monitoring or evaluation and had fewer meetings involving all staff, such as workshops or staff meetings and worked with individuals or small subgroups, often in their office.

Second CF, the Principal's Right Hand (person)

One surprising finding was the discovery of a Second Change Facilitator who was involved with implementation at each school (Hord, Stiegelbauer & Hall, 1984). These Second Change Facilitators played a complementary role to that of the principal in the nature of their interventions. They often took responsibility for training events, as they were more likely to be curriculum specialists. They provided more individual consultation to teachers about the innovation while the principal provided support and direction to groups. They monitored teachers to see how they were doing with the innovation for the purpose of corrective feedback and planning while the principal monitored and evaluated overall progress of the innovation. The Second CF role was filled by a variety of persons--assistant principals, appointed teachers, district resource persons and curriculum coordinators.

The location and role of these Second CFs seemed in larger part to be determined by the facilitator style of the principal. In Responder schools, where the principal took little action in the change effort, the Second CF did much of the intervening and often was located at the district level, as in the

case of a district consultant for the innovation. In the Initiator schools the Second CF came from within the school itself, allowing the principal better control of the direction the implementation was taking. Manager style principals, who involved themselves with their staffs in getting the job done, used what resources were best available to the task, i.e. their Second CF came from within the school and also from the district level. If the district provided an efficient facilitator to aid implementation, Managers would utilize that help as a Second CF for the innovation.

The role of the Second CF was also conditioned by the change facilitating style of the principal. Overall, the most intensive and complementary intervening occurred with principals who were Initiator style principals. When the principal was a manager, the Second CF did less. Managers, with the best of intentions, may be "too involved" and may even block out some of the possible interventions or actions of the Second CF. In Responder led schools, the Second CF is often in the position of having to do what the principal doesn't do. The Responder principal's openness to "prodding" or outside help further conditions the actions of their Second CF (Hall, et al, 1983).

Implementation Success, Climate Data, and Principal Style

While the goal of an improvement effort obviously is to create improvements, often the process of improvement can cause considerable stress for participants. Research staff, as a part of the study, assessed the psychological climate of the school as it might be affected by the implementation process or as it might reflect principal style. A "School Ecology Survey" was developed for the study which allowed teachers to express quantitatively their perceptions of the climate in their school. This survey focused in part on their interactions with the principal as a part of the climate measure (Hall, et al, 1983).

The degree of implementation success at each school was determined in two key ways: 1) an implementation success ranking for each school was established based on implementation data collected over the period of the study. These data had been recorded at different points in the school year to measure changes in teachers' use of the innovation and in teacher concerns about the innovation. Next 2), these rank orderings were correlated with other variables in the study including principal style to determine which seemed to contribute most to overall implementation success.

These measures showed different results in terms of principal style. First, principal change facilitating style was the variable that correlated most significantly with overall implementation success. The more nearly a principal functioned in the Initiator style, the greater was the implementation success of the school. Manager style principals had the next highest success ranking and Responder style principals had the lowest. Results from the climate survey showed that schools with Manager style principals had better climate according to the survey, with Initiator led schools second to Manager led schools (Hall, et al, 1983). As Manager style principals worked with their teachers on implementation and were concerned about teacher overload, researchers hypothesized that this contributed to a better sense of climate in the school. Initiator style principals pushed their teachers more. The "push" characteristic of Initiator principals, however, did contribute to higher implementation success.

Implications for Change Leadership

While these findings represent only the tip of the information iceberg of the PTI study, they do provide some insight into the nature of leadership for change. The following descriptors illustrate some of the behaviors of principals in the study that related to successful change facilitation. As

Initiator style principals were seen to be the most effective of the three styles in terms of their implementation success, this list largely reflects their intervention behaviors.

Effective leaders for change:

have a clear vision of short and long-range goals for the school.

work intensely with persistence to attain their vision.

have the achievement and happiness of students as their first priority.

have high expectations for students, teachers and themselves.

are actively involved in decision making relative to instructional and administrative affairs.

attend to instructional objectives as well as to instructional strategies and planning.

collect information that keeps them well informed about the performance of their teachers.

involve teachers in decision making, but within the framework of established goals and expectations.

directly or indirectly provide for development of teachers' knowledge and skills.

structure the school as a workplace with a priority on teaching and learning.

protect the school and faculty from unnecessary intrusions.

delegate tasks and responsibilities and then closely monitor the completion of those tasks.

seek policy changes at the district level for benefit of the school.

give enthusiastic support to the change.

provide for the personal welfare of teachers.

model the norms they want teachers to support.

aggressively seek support for resources within and outside the school to foster goals of the school.

Many of the findings to come out of the PTI data compliment much of the research and literature on effective schools. Effective schools are seen to

be those that have 1) positive school climate, 2) clear and focused mission, 3) strong instructional leadership, 4) high expectations for success, 5) effective instruction, 6) frequent monitoring of student progress, and 7) parental and community understanding and support (Brookover et al, 1983). The behaviors listed above support the growth of such conditions if not reflect the conditions themselves.

Ongoing research being conducted by RIP staff at the University of Texas has taken some of the findings from the PTI study to the High School level to investigate their application in that setting. Initial data analysis suggests that the concept of change facilitating styles also exists in the high school. This early data from the High School study also indicates that despite the often more complex structural and managerial structures present in high schools, the characteristics of an effective leader at the elementary level also are those of an effective leader in the High School (Hall, et al, 1984).

The behaviors described in this paper and the findings from the PTI study overall illustrate that principals can and do make a difference with the interventions they make. They have at their command both the resources and the opportunities to take actions that positively affect teachers' use of instructional innovations as well as the outcomes of those innovations.

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